

Swedish Rule Imperiled By Wennerstrom Bomb

By The Associated Press

STOCKHOLM.

The sensational spy case involving Col. Stig Erik Wennerstrom has ballooned to proportions which could topple Europe's oldest Socialist government and bring on a reappraisal of Sweden's traditional neutrality.

Prime Minister Tage Erlander's government—in power since 1946—is under stinging attack throughout the nation following disclosures that airman-diplomat Wennerstrom spied for the Russians for 18 years before he was detected.

Opposition parties have formed a united front in the assault on Mr. Erlander. Many of the nation's newspapers have unleashed the bitterest attack against him since he took office.

Jolt to the Public

The public has been so jolted by the scandal that the anger and resentment are almost unparalleled in this nation of usually reserved people. The depth of the reaction has shocked the government. Swedish business men, from a tour of the press reported:

"Everybody was talking about this affair. The reaction was unusually strong and I doubt Wennerstrom has been the most hated man in modern times in Sweden. The Swedes were really shaken down to their boots, and it surprised me we were capable of such strong feelings."

One hears over and over such comments. "Wennerstrom gave away Sweden" and "how could a Swede do this to his own people?"

Blame Charged

To many Swedes, the Wennerstrom case involved a series of blunders. And the widespread feeling was that the government had made poor choices to continue the

The scandal was not only a blow to the government but also to the Swedish defense forces. It was a blow to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. By his actions, Wennerstrom had exposed the defense gap. The government was forced to admit that it was not as strong as it had seemed. The public was put in a

stance. He was not arrested until late in June.

Many Swedes are bitterly asking:

What were the security services doing all this time? What security checks, if any, are run on individuals having access to the nation's top defense secrets? And if they are run, why did they not turn up Wennerstrom's contacts with the Russians?

Why did the security services fail to look into his lavish way of living? His salary was \$9,000 a year. Yet he lived in a \$40,000 villa in Stockholm's exclusive, cocktail-circuit Djursholm district. He entertained frequently and expensively. He gambled heavily.

When Wennerstrom retired from the Defense Ministry in 1961, he was assigned as an adviser to the foreign Ministry.

There he had access to data requested from the Defense Ministry. The Defense Ministry gave its blessing to Wennerstrom's foreign office assignment, although Defense Minister Sven Andersson has said he was suspicious of Wennerstrom years before his arrest.

Swedes are asking: Why was a security suspect brought on to the Foreign Office? Was there a warning as to his reliability?

They also are asking why Mr. Erlander was not told of the allegations about Wennerstrom. Prime Minister learned of the affair only after Wennerstrom's arrest. Obviously not and embarrassed, he hurried back to Stockholm from a mission in Italy.

Many Swedes are saying there is no doubt that the government, which controls the security services had been negligent to an amazing degree. Is the true story of the Wennerstrom scandal? What is the government trying to cover up?

With public speculation was kindled by the abrupt departure of Defense Minister Sven Andersson and his top deputy for a few days after the announcement of Wennerstrom's arrest. They left when it was clear that the defense services faced the mammoth task of closing the defense gap created by Wennerstrom's betrayal of military secrets to the Russians. There is wide speculation that Mr. Erlander ordered Mr. Andersson to leave Stockholm and Mr. Andersson will be replaced or be replaced. But the public is angry and suspicious about his leadership in this critical time.